

POLITICAL.

LETTER OF THE POSTMASTER GENERAL

TO THE
CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT, D. C.
Giving the grounds on which he denies their legal authority to issue a mandamus, commanding him to credit Messrs. Stockton & Stokes, and others, with a certain sum of money awarded them by the late Solicitor of the Treasury.

Again: There are several provisions to the act limiting the power of the Solicitor. One of them is as follows, viz: "Provided, that the said Solicitor is not authorized to make any allowance, for any suspension or withholding of money as aforesaid, for allowances or overpayments made as aforesaid, on the route from Baltimore to Washington, under the contract of 1827." It, instead of 1827, the year 1831 had been used in this proviso, it would have covered a part of the allowances embraced in the award. Had it done so and had the award embraced that or any other allowance prohibited by the proviso, would it not have been the duty of the Postmaster General to refuse the credit and payment? It cannot be doubted. But how could he ascertain whether the allowance was prohibited by the proviso or not? Could he do it in any other way than by examining the allowance and comparing it with the proviso? If, in his opinion, it was prohibited, he would refuse to pay it—if not, he would pay it. And is there not discretion here? May he not pay, or refuse to pay, according to his opinion of the power of the Solicitor to make the allowance?

On these points there can be no doubt that the Postmaster General has discretion. But what is the difference between his right to determine whether the Solicitor has transgressed his power on specific points or in his award generally? Had he not a discretion to refuse to pay the whole award, or any part of it if he honestly believed it to be a law? If, on looking at the law and the award, he found that the Solicitor had departed from his authority altogether, it cannot be doubted that he had a right under the law, and that it would have been his duty, to decline carrying it into effect.

This is not a case, therefore, where a specific duty is enjoined by law, in the performance of which there is no discretion, such as the payment of a definite sum of money, the registering of a certificate, or the recording of a patent, and consequently it is not a proper case for a mandamus.

2. It seems to be conceded, that, under existing laws, a writ of mandamus can be issued by a Court only as a means of exercising its jurisdiction, and not for the purpose of obtaining jurisdiction.

Let us apply the principle to this case. The jurisdiction of every court must be original or appellate. Original jurisdiction is where, by authority of the Constitution and laws, proceedings are originated in the court in the first instance. Appellate jurisdiction is where, by authority of the same Constitution and laws, a case is taken out of a lower tribunal into a higher, with a view to a revision of the proceedings of an inferior court.

In this case the Circuit Court of the District had no original jurisdiction to adjudicate upon the claims of the contractors. There was no mode known to the laws by which they could prosecute those claims in any court whatsoever. Congress created a special tribunal for that purpose. They made the Solicitor of the Treasury a chancellor for the special object, and clothed him with power to take evidence and adjudicate upon the claims of the contractors. No other court on earth could have entertained this case.

Nor was any appeal from the decision of this special court provided for by the law which created it. Neither the Circuit Court of this District, nor the Supreme Court of the United States, nor any other judicial tribunal, had power to bring up the case from the Solicitor of the Treasury, either before or after his award, and revise his proceedings. No judge could take from, or add to, the amount of his award, nor has any judge the legal power to say whether that officer decided according to law or against law. The Solicitor's power in this case was equal to that conferred on the Supreme Court of the United States in cases subjected to its jurisdiction, and above that of the Circuit Court for the District of Columbia from which there is an appeal. The Solicitor had as much power under the law which gave him jurisdiction, to issue a mandamus to bring before him, for consideration or revision, a case acted on in the District Court or the Supreme Court, as either of them has to issue a mandamus to bring before them for consideration or revision a case decided in his court; and he has as much right to interpose by a mandamus to execute their judgment as they his.

How, then, do the Circuit Court get jurisdiction in this case? Not by the law, for the law gives them none, either original or appellate. They obtain it by the mandamus, and by that only.

Is it said that they do not claim jurisdiction to inquire into and revise the Solicitor's award? What, then, does their jurisdiction amount to? What "case" is this, where the jurisdiction is not to inquire into, to revise, to adjudge, but merely to execute? In the ordinary routine of judicial proceedings, the "case" comes first, the "suit" follows, and "judgment" closes the rear. Here it is not a "case," nor a "suit," of which the Court takes cognizance, but a "judgment." It is the judgment and the award of another independent court, upon the proceedings of which the law gives neither resort nor appeal to the District Court.

And if the Court do not intend to look into the award of the Solicitor, to ascertain whether it be according to law or against law, what do they mean by calling on the Postmaster General to give his reasons for not carrying it into execution? If they mean any thing by such a call, it must be that they will consider the reasons which may be adduced by him, and decide whether they be sufficient or not. Suppose the Postmaster General were to allege that the Solicitor had considered and allowed claims which he was not authorized to allow by the act of Congress from which he derived his authority. If this were true, it would certainly be a good reason for not paying the award. But could the Circuit Court inquire into their truth? Whence do they derive the power to inquire or decide whether the Solicitor allowed too much or too little; whether he adhered to the law or transgressed the law; whether he awarded to the claimants a just compensation for services actually rendered, or heaped upon them tears and hundreds of thousands, without shadow of contracts or pretence of service? Nothing would seem more plain, than that the Court have no power to call for books and papers, or summon witnesses, or consider statements, with a view of deciding whether the award of the Solicitor be right or wrong. If they have no such power, it is palpable that they cannot make any examinations, and come to any decision which can exonerate the Postmaster General from executing the award, however illegal or monstrous may be the allowances which it sanctions.

Is not this absence of power to consider that which may be a good reason for the Postmaster General's refusal to execute the award, the strongest possible proof that the Court have no authority to institute their present proceedings? It will be admitted by all, that if the Postmaster General could show that the award was illegal or corrupt, it would be a good excuse for not carrying it into effect until it could be revised by some superior tribunal. But this Court, not being clothed by law with power to consider those points, has no authority to judge of the legality or reasonableness of the Postmaster General's excuses, although they may be such as not only to justify him, but to entitle him to commendation.

No man will deny that cases may and do arise, in which an executive officer is perfectly justifiable in refusing to perform a specific act required of him by law. In these cases, he is responsible to his superior and to Congress, but not to the Courts. If the Postmaster General were directed by express law to pay \$50,000 to a contractor, and should, before doing so, discover that the passage of the act of Congress had been procured by false and fabricated testimony, it would be his duty to refuse payment

until the whole subject could be again brought under the revision of Congress. Yet the law might be plain and peremptory in its terms, leaving him no discretion. Might not this Court, upon the principles laid down by them, grant a mandamus to the claimants? Could they, in such a proceeding, inquire into and revise the act of Congress, or would they peremptorily order and forcibly compel the Postmaster General to execute the law, the fraud notwithstanding? If he had no "discretion," and they no power of revision, such must be their decision.

Hence it is inferred, that the Court has no jurisdiction of this case in law, and can only obtain what they may exercise by their mandamus; a proof that a writ of mandamus will not lie in such a case.

FOURTH REASON.
The Court have ordered the Postmaster General to perform a legal impossibility.

A mandamus is a command to do a specific act. The specific act ordered to be done in this case is to credit the relators with a full amount of the Solicitor's award. A credit can only be given by an entry upon some book in which their accounts are lawfully kept.

No accounts are kept with contractors in the Post Office Department, nor has the Postmaster General the custody or control of the books in which they are kept. All the accounts of the Post Office Department are kept in the Treasury Department by the Auditor created for that purpose by the act of July 21, 1836. That officer is appointed by the President and Senate; and so far is he from being dependent on the Postmaster General, that his clerks are appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury. To his office have been transferred long since all the accounts, and the books connected with them, formerly kept by the Postmaster General.

By advertising to the fact that the act for the relief of Messrs. Stockton & Stokes, and that to change the organization of the Post Office Department, passed on the same day, the occasion of this practicable discrepancy between them will be understood. The former was drawn with reference to the organization of the Department at the time of its introduction into Congress. Then the Postmaster General kept the accounts, and the entries in the books were his entries. He had the legal power and authority to give a credit to the contractors in this case. But another act on the day the act for their relief passed. That act now in question was not altered so as to accommodate it to the change, and require the credit to be given by the new Auditor instead of the Postmaster General, was doubtless an inadvertence; but it is one which the legislative authority alone can correct. As the law stands, the Postmaster General has just as much authority to make entries in the books of the Second, Third, and Fourth Auditors, as he has in those of the Auditor created by the act of 1836.

Hence the Court will perceive that they have ordered the Postmaster General to do that which he cannot lawfully do—to enter a credit or credits on books of which he has neither the custody nor control.

These views the undersigned submits to the Court with much confidence in their soundness. He thinks it is shown:

1. That it is the function of the Executive "to take care that the laws," special as well as general, "be faithfully executed;" and that of the Judiciary to expound such as require it; that to the President of the United States, and not to the courts of justice, belongs the duty of directing and controlling all executive officers in the performance of their official duties; and that when the courts interpose to control them, they assume an executive function, invade the province of the President, and subvert the constitutional assignment of powers.

2. That Congress have not conferred or attempted to confer on the Circuit Court for the District of Columbia authority to issue a writ of mandamus, for the purpose of controlling executive officers in the performance of their duties, whether general or specific; that the Postmaster General is an executive officer; that in the matter upon which this proceeding has originated, he has acted in that capacity; and that he is not lawfully controllable therein by a writ of mandamus.

3. That in the case before the court, the Postmaster General had a clear and undoubted discretion, in the exercise of which he is amenable to no judicial tribunal; and that the Court, having no jurisdiction of the matter in question, either original or appellate, cannot lawfully court and obtain it by a mandamus.

4. That the Court have ordered the Postmaster General to do that which he has no lawful power to do, not having official custody or control of the books on which the credits are commanded to be entered.

In addition to these persuasive considerations, it cannot be forgotten that the power now asserted has been slumbering from the birth of the Constitution; and now, almost half a century from the organization of the Government, is for the first time called into requisition. How was it that Marbury, after his right to his commission was so strongly asserted by the Supreme Court, did not betake himself of a resort for redress to the Circuit Court for the District of Columbia? Why is it that the numberless claimants whose accounts have been rejected at the Treasury, though asserted by them to be clearly warranted by law, have not applied to this Court for its mandamus to compel the Auditors and Register to give them credits upon their books? Why did not the Bank of the United States, instead of agitating the country and thundering in the Capitol, apply to this Court for its mandamus to compel the Secretary of the Treasury to restore the public deposits, which, it was alleged, had been removed from it in contempt of law and in violation of the Constitution? Have none of these occasions been sufficient to rouse this giant power from its enduring slumber? Are its mighty arms to be flung aloft for the first time in vindication of Post Office extra allowances of doubtful legality and undoubted enormity, which have already been denounced by Congress and condemned by the nation?

The undersigned desists from a theme on which it is not pleasant to dwell. It has been his studied effort to avoid, as far as possible, expressions calculated to wound sensibility or create excitement. The voice of reason alone is worthy of a subject so comprehensive and so grave. If a sentence, or a word, is to be found in this paper which can justly be construed as disrespectful to the Court, or personally reproachful to any one, it has escaped through inadvertence, and conveys a meaning which was not intended.

AMOS KENDALL.

Postmaster General.

JUNE 24, 1837.

OPINION OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL in relation to the power of the Circuit Court for the District of Columbia to issue a Mandamus to compel the Postmaster General to credit Messrs. Stockton & Stokes and others with a certain sum of money.

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE, June 19, 1837.

SIR: I have had the honor to receive your letter of the 7th inst. enclosing a printed copy of the opinion delivered by the Chief Justice of the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia or the county of Washington, upon the application of WILLIAM B. STOCKTON and others for a writ of mandamus, to be directed to the Postmaster General of the United States, and requesting me to examine it and to inform you, whether I find anything therein to change the opinion heretofore expressed by me, relative to the jurisdiction of the Court over the matter now in question.

Pursuant to this request, I have examined the paper referred to me, with the attention and respect due to its author and to the Court of which he is the organ; but, after the fullest consideration which I have been able to give to the arguments contained in it, I still adhere to the opinion, that the Court had no power to issue the writ in question.

The case proposed by you, in your communication of the 29th ultimo, and now presented, relates to the power of the Circuit Court of this District to issue a mandamus to the Postmaster General—an executive officer of the United States—for the purpose of compelling him to perform an official act, alleged to have been enjoined upon him by a

special act of Congress, passed for the relief of the parties applying for the writ. This act treats exclusively of certain claims depending on the Post Office Department, and growing out of contracts with that department; it refers to the claims of the Solicitor of the Treasury for settlement; and it directs the Postmaster General to credit the contractors with whatever sum of money, if any, the Solicitor shall decide to be due them. The duty imposed by this law is therefore, in every sense, an official duty; it relates to the business of his Department; it is imposed on him by his name of office. The Solicitor of the Treasury has made an award, by which he decides that certain sums of money are due to the contractors, and the Postmaster General has credited them with a part of these sums; but, for reasons satisfactory to his own judgment and sense of duty, has refused to credit the balance, until directed so to do by a further act of Congress. The contractors have applied to the late President of the United States to take order, by virtue of his constitutional duty to see the laws faithfully executed, for the crediting of the balance; but, being satisfied with the course of the Postmaster General, he declined making any such order, and referred the parties to Congress for further legislative directions. The like application has been made to the present Chief Magistrate who deemed it inexpedient to interfere with the disposition of the subject made by his predecessor; and the parties now apply to the Circuit Court of this District for an order, in the form of a writ of mandamus, to the Postmaster General, to credit and pay the balance of the Solicitor's award, on the ground that this is a mere ministerial act, to the performance of which the applicants have a fixed legal right, under the act of Congress as it now stands, and for which they have no other adequate legal remedy. The Court has so far adopted these views as to issue an alternative mandamus, commanding the Postmaster General to give the credit applied for, or to show cause why he has not done so; but it has reserved the question whether the mandamus shall issue to command the payment of the balance, for further consideration, when the result of the first writ shall have been ascertained.

In my former communication it was shown, that according to the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States, in the cases of *McIntyre vs. Wood*, (7 Cranch, 504,) and *McClung vs. Silliman*, (6 Wheaton, 598,) the circuit courts of the United States, out of the District of Columbia, have no jurisdiction, under the laws now in force, to issue a writ of mandamus to an officer of the executive department; and the opinion was expressed, that the acts of Congress organizing the Circuit Court of this District and regulating its jurisdiction, though they conferred some powers not delegated to the other circuit courts, did not in express terms, or by any general grant of power, authorize it to issue a writ of mandamus to an executive officer of the United States; and therefore, that its jurisdiction, in this respect, was the same with that of the other circuit courts.

The character and effect of the decisions referred to, as to the other circuit courts, and the necessity of proving, before the writ applied for can be issued by the Circuit Court of this District, that Congress have conferred on it a jurisdiction, in this particular, not possessed by those courts, are fully admitted in the opinion before me; and the Court would doubtless have come to the like conclusion with me, had it taken the like view of the acts of Congress regulating its jurisdiction. The opinion maintains, that the power and jurisdiction conferred on this Court are much more comprehensive than those possessed by the other circuit courts, and sufficiently so to include the power in question. To establish this, a comparison is instituted between the acts of Congress relative to these courts; and the result of this comparison, aided by inference and reasonings thereon, drawn from the language of the Supreme Court in the cases referred to, is supposed to be in favor of the jurisdiction claimed by this Court.

The result in my opinion, is directly the reverse. The power and jurisdiction of the ordinary circuit courts of the United States, so far as regards this subject, depends on the following clauses of the 11th and 14th sections of the judiciary act of 1789.

The 11th section provides "that the circuit courts shall have original cognizance, concurrent with the courts of the several States of all suits of a civil nature, at common law, or in equity, where the matter in dispute exceeds, exclusive of costs, the sum or value of five hundred dollars, and the United States are plaintiffs or petitioners; or an alien is a party, or the dispute is between a citizen of the State where the suit is brought and a citizen of another State."

The 14th section enacts, "that all the before mentioned courts of the United States shall have power to issue writs of *scire facias*, *habeas corpus*, and all other writs not specially provided for by statute, which may be necessary for the exercise of their respective jurisdictions, and agreeable to the principles and usages of law."

On these provisions, the Supreme Court held, in the case of *McIntyre vs. Wood*, (7 Cranch, 504,) that the Circuit Court of Ohio did not possess the power to issue a mandamus to the Register of the Land Office. The power of the circuit courts, under the general words of the 14th section, to issue writs of mandamus in some cases was not denied; but it was held, that the power was confined exclusively to cases in which the writ might "be necessary to the exercise of their jurisdiction."

By this was meant, as explained in the subsequent case of *McClung vs. Silliman*, (6 Wheaton, 598,) that the mandamus can only be issued "in cases where the jurisdiction already exists, and not where it is to be created or acquired by means of the writ proposed to be sued out."

The powers and jurisdiction of the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, so far as regards the present question, are conferred by the 3d and 5th sections of the act "concerning the District of Columbia," approved Feb. 27th, 1801.

The material part of the 3d section is as follows: "That there shall be a Court in the said District, which shall be called the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia; and the said court, and the judges thereof, shall have all the powers vested in the circuit courts, and the Judges of the circuit courts of the United States."

The 5th section is in the following words: "That the said court (the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia) shall have cognizance of all crimes and offences committed within the said District, and of all cases in law and equity between parties, both or either of which shall be resident, or shall be found within the said District; and also of all actions or suits of a civil nature, at common law or in equity, in which the United States shall be plaintiffs or complainants; and of all seizures on land and water; and all penalties and forfeitures made, arising or accruing under the laws of the United States."

On the latter of these sections, (the 5th) Judge Cranch holds that it confers on the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia a jurisdiction not given to the other Circuit Courts, which may be enforced by the writ of mandamus, whenever such a writ is necessary to the exercise of that jurisdiction. This view of the case appears to have been suggested by the following remarks of Mr. Justice Johnson, in the case of *McIntyre vs. Wood*: "Had the 11th section of the Judiciary act covered the whole ground of the Constitution, there would be much reason for exercising this power (the power of issuing writs of mandamus) in many cases wherein some ministerial act is necessary to the completion of an individual right, arising under the laws of the United States, and the 14th section of the same act would sanction the issuing of the writ for such a purpose. But although the judicial power of the United States extends to cases arising under the laws of the United States, the Legislature have not thought proper to delegate the exercise of that power to its Circuit Courts, except in certain special cases."

In order to bring the case within these remarks, Judge Cranch argues that the 5th section above quoted, has covered the whole ground of the Constitution of the United States, and much more, except as to certain cases not material to the present discussion; and that, with such exception, the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia has cognizance of all cases in law and equity, whether arising under the Constitution or laws of the United States, or under the adopted laws of Virginia and Maryland, with the only condition that one of the parties shall be resident or found within the District; and that the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia is therefore, "in that condition" of which Mr. Justice Johnson speaks. He also argues, chiefly on the authority of a part of the opinion of Chief Justice Marshall, in the noted case of *Marbury vs. Madison*, (1 Cranch, 163,) that the act of Congress for the relief of the relators, directs the performance, by the Postmaster General, of a mere ministerial act; that the right of the relators, and the obligation of the Postmaster General, are clear and absolute; that the refusal of the latter to perform the act, makes a case in law, of which the Court has jurisdiction; that the only appropriate remedy is by writ of mandamus; that this writ is therefore necessary to the exercise of the jurisdiction of the Court; and that the Court has not only the power, but is bound, to issue it.

The whole of this argument rests on the assumption that if the grant of jurisdiction covers the whole ground of the Constitution, it will include the power to issue a writ of mandamus to an executive officer, commanding the performance of an official act, provided the Court shall be of opinion that such act is merely ministerial in its nature—an assumption inferred by the Court, from the above-quoted remarks of Judge Johnson. I shall hereafter have occasion to show, that the existence of such a jurisdiction in any of the courts is incompatible with the distribution of the powers of Government made by the Constitution, and with the separate and independent authority vested by it in the President; but before entering on that subject, some objections of a minor, but perhaps not less decisive, nature, may be mentioned.

1. The above-quoted observation of Mr. Justice Johnson was not necessary to the decision of the case of *McIntyre vs. Wood*; and the use now made of it by the Circuit Court appears to be repugnant to the opinion of the same Judge in the case of *McClung vs. Silliman*, and to the judgment rendered in the latter case. The existence of this objection is fully admitted by Chief Justice CRANCH, in the following remarks: "But although we have shown, as we think, that even under the opinion of the Supreme Court, in *McIntyre vs. Wood*, this Court has power to issue a writ of mandamus in the present case, yet it may possibly be objected that our argument is founded upon inferences drawn from the language of that opinion, which inferences Mr. Justice JOHNSON, in the case of *McClung vs. Silliman* (6 Wheaton 598) repudiates."

Let us see how the objection is gotten over. In the first place it is suggested that "the only point decided in the case of *McClung vs. Silliman*, was, that a State Court cannot issue a mandamus to an officer of the United States;" and the remarks of Judge Johnson, repudiating the inferences referred to, are therefore treated as unnecessary to the decision of the case.

If this were so, it might still be replied, that the obiter remarks of the judge who delivered the opinion of the Court, repudiating inferences drawn from obiter remarks of the same Judge in a former case, are abundantly sufficient to meet an argument founded on such inferences. But I think it will be seen, on comparing Judge Johnson's statement of the facts with subsequent parts of his opinion, that the case presented another point which directly called for the remarks in question.

Mr. Justice JOHNSON says—"The plaintiff in error, who was also the plaintiff below, supposes himself entitled to a pre-emptive interest in a tract of land in the State of Ohio, and claims of the Register of the land office of the United States, the legal acts and documents upon which such rights are initiated. The officer refuses, under the idea that the right is already legally vested in another; and that he possesses, himself, no power over the subject in controversy. A mandamus is then moved for in the Circuit Court of the United States, and that Court decides that Congress has vested it with no such controlling power over the acts of the ministerial officers in the given case. The same application is then preferred to the State Court for the County in which the subject in controversy is situated. The State Court sustains its own jurisdiction over the Register of the land office; but, on a view of the merits of the claim, dismisses the motion. From both these decisions appeals are made to this Court in form of a 'writ of error.' He then refers to the decision in *McIntyre vs. Wood*: says the influence of that decision on the cases before the Court, is resisted on the ground that it did not then appear that the controversy was between parties, who, under the description of person, were entitled to sue in the Circuit Court of the United States; and that 'it is now contended, that as the parties to this controversy are competent to sue under the 11th section, being citizens of different States, that this is a case within the provisions of the 11th section, and the Circuit Court was vested with power to issue this writ, under the description of a writ specially provided for by statute, but necessary for the exercise of its jurisdiction.'"

It thus appears that, besides the question concerning the power of the State Court, the question whether the Circuit Court of the United States for the State of Ohio could issue a mandamus to a Register of the land office, to decide conflicting claims to a certificate of purchase, one claimant being a citizen of Ohio, and the other a citizen of another State, was also submitted for decision. The argument of the plaintiff's counsel in support of such a jurisdiction, like that of the Circuit Court of this District in the present case, was founded on inferences drawn from the language held by Judge Johnson in the case of *McIntyre vs. Wood*. The Judge notices it at length; rejects, in the most decided manner, the inferences on which it rested; and thus disposes of that part of the case which related to the proceeding before the Circuit Court.

Another answer to the anticipated objection is, that the Circuit Court of this District has cognizance of all cases in law and equity, however arising, between parties, both or either of which are resident or found within the District—or a position constantly insisted on in the opinion, and which I propose to examine under the next head.

2. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that the construction given to the language of Judge Johnson in the cases referred to, is the correct one, and that the argument founded on it is sound in principle, still the present case cannot be distinguished from those decided by the Supreme Court, because there is no essential difference between the 5th section of the act "concerning the District of Columbia," on which the Circuit Court relies for its claim of jurisdiction over all cases in law and equity, however arising, and the 11th section of the judiciary act of 1789, which prescribes the jurisdiction of the other courts.

The material words of the 5th section, omitting other clauses of cases, are, that the Circuit Court of this District shall have cognizance "of all cases in law and equity between parties both or either of which shall be resident, or shall be found within the said District."

Those of the 11th section, omitting value and alternative cases, are, that the Circuit Courts of the United States shall have cognizance "of all suits of a civil nature at common law or in equity, where the dispute is between a citizen of the State where the suit is brought, and a citizen of another State."

Except that in the other circuit courts, it is requisite, that one party should be a citizen of the State where the suit is brought, and the other party a citizen of another State, and that in this District it will be sufficient if either of the parties be resident or be found here, there would seem to be no substantial difference between the two provisions. Indeed, unless the phrase "all cases in law and equity" used in the one case, means something different from "all suits of a civil nature at common law or in equity," used in the other, it is certain, that there can be no such difference, and consequently that the power and jurisdiction of the Circuit Court of this District, in regard to the writ of mandamus, so far as depends on the 5th section above quoted, are precisely the same with those of the other Circuit Courts.

It may be inferred from the opinion of the Circuit Court, that the former of these phrases was supposed to mean something more comprehensive than the other, and so much more so as to cover the whole ground of the Constitution, which it was adjudged, in *McIntyre vs. Wood*, that the other phrase did not do. No reason is

very distinctly assigned for this distinction; but it appears to rest on the use of the word "cases," in that clause of the Constitution which provides that the judicial power of the United States "shall extend to all cases in law and equity under" the Constitution and laws of the United States, &c. But according to the Supreme Court of the United States, and to the opinions of other expositors of the Constitution, the word "case," in this section, means neither more nor less than the word "suit." Mr. Justice STORY, in his commentaries (vol. iii, p. 507) in answer to the inquiry what constitutes a case within the meaning of the clause, remarks, that "a case, in the sense of this clause, arises when some subject, touching the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States, is submitted to the Courts by a party, who asserts his rights in a form prescribed by law. In other words, a case is a suit in law or equity, instituted according to the regular course of judicial proceedings; and when it involves any question arising under the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States, it is within the judicial power conferred to the Union." And for this, he cites the decisions of the Supreme Court and other authorities. On the other hand, the Supreme Court held, in 2 Peters, 461, that the word "suit," used in the 23d section of the judiciary act, applies to any proceeding in a court of justice, by which an individual person that remedy in a court of justice which the law allows him. It seems therefore to be settled, that the words are substantially convertible terms, the one referring to the subject matter of a judicial proceeding, and the other to the proceeding on such subject matter.

The words of the two acts being substantially the same, can there be any difference in their legal effect? And if the words used in the 11th section of the act of 1789, do not cover the whole ground of the Constitution, and therefore do not authorize the issuing of a mandamus to an executive officer of the United States as an original remedy, as has been adjudged by the Supreme Court, how, without overruling the decisions of that court, can words of precisely the same import in the 5th section of the act of 1801, be held to cover the whole ground, and to authorize the issuing of such a writ?

It may be admitted, that under the words above quoted from the fifth section, taken in connection with the first section of the same act, which declares that the laws of Virginia and Maryland, as they existed at the date of the act, shall continue and be in force in the parts of the district ceded by those States respectively, the Court may lawfully issue writs of mandamus, even as original process, in all cases, arising between individuals, both or either of whom are resident or may be found within the District, in which by the law of Virginia, or of Maryland, as the case may be, such writs could be issued. If this be so, as I incline to think it is, it is because this remedy, as a part of the adopted local law, which is declared to remain in force, and to which, for the purpose of this remedy, the jurisdiction of the Circuit Court is attached. But it is impossible to acquire any such jurisdiction in this way, over the officers of the United States in their official capacities, because in those capacities they were never subject to the laws of Virginia or of Maryland; nor did those laws ever include, nor could they confer, any jurisdiction over them by mandamus, or otherwise.

Officers of the United States cannot sue in their names of office, except as expressly authorized so to do by act of Congress; and the like legislative provisions is necessary to render them holders of their official capacities, to the process of the courts. No such provision is found in the act concerning the District of Columbia.

It is also worthy of remark, that, notwithstanding the strong opinion of Chief Justice MARSHALL, in the case of *Marbury vs. Madison*, in favor of the right of the applicant to a remedy by mandamus in any court possessing jurisdiction, no proceeding in the Circuit Court of this District appears to have been instituted, or to have been thought of by the parties or their counsel, though the Court then possessed precisely the same power, in this respect, which it possesses now, and though all the parties were residents of the District. This omission, under all the circumstances, proves very clearly that the jurisdiction now claimed was not then supposed to exist. Instances have no doubt frequently occurred since that period, in which individuals have deemed themselves aggrieved by the action of the executive officers, but in cases affecting the rights of such individuals; but it appears to be the first application ever made to the Circuit Court of the District for a remedy by mandamus. After the most careful examination of various provisions of the act of 1801, concerning the District of Columbia, I find nothing in those provisions to authorize the application of such a remedy.

3. In subsequent part of the opinion, the claim of jurisdiction is defended on another ground. "Our powers," say the Court, "are given by the third, and our jurisdiction by the fifth section of the act of the 27th of February, 1801;" and after quoting the third section, (copied above,) the opinion suggests, that the only circuit courts and judges of the circuit courts existing when the act of the 27th of February, 1801, was passed, were those ordained and established by the act of Congress of the 13th of February, 1801; that the tenth and eleventh sections of that act were far more comprehensive than those of 1789, organizing the former circuit courts, and covered the whole ground of the Constitution; and that if they had been in full force when the case of *McIntyre vs. Wood* arose, the decision in that case would probably have been different; and the proposition is advanced, that "although the act of February 13th, 1801, was repealed by the act of 1802, yet the repeal did not in any manner, affect the powers or jurisdiction of this Court, given by the act of the 27th of February, 1801."

From the subordinate place assigned to this argument, it does not seem to be much relied on by the Court; and, in my judgment, it is wholly untenable.

[TO BE CONCLUDED TO-MORROW.]

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